

World Trade Center did in fact say exactly that, that those people were allowed to be in the United States because they were able to swim in this sea of illegal immigration and they were undetectable.

This is why when people talk to us about immigration, and we often have people respond when we start talking about the national security issues. I have been in Mexico and have had Members of the Mexican Government say, you know, none of those people were Mexican that committed those crimes. Of course not. It is the fact that we are only as strong as our weakest link. If we cannot control our borders because we are trying to let illegal immigrants come across from Mexico who are not trying to do anything really bad to us, we cannot possibly hope to protect ourselves from those who are trying to do something bad. That is the point here. That is why we are talking about this as a national security issue.

My friend, the gentleman from Virginia, mentioned this Newsweek article. He has learned that 9-11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed told interrogators that he discussed bringing operatives through the Mexican border. They worry about these people coming across, suicide bombings at soft targets like malls, public transportation.

Another worry, of course, is that a terrorist could acquire shoulder-fired missiles and shoot them at passenger planes. Of course, any number of horrendous things could happen. Our minds could run wild on all the things that could happen in this country because we are an open and free society. We do not want to change that.

The best way to avoid having an overreaction in the United States and trying to pass laws that we worry about in terms of what we will do to civil liberties, as Members know, we get lots of mail on the PATRIOT Act, and whatever kind of legislation that may be being formulated here as an addition to the PATRIOT Act. There are concerns, and concerns I share, about overreaching government activity. But one way to avoid that, Mr. Speaker, is to protect our borders. It is to stop, to the extent humanly possible, them from getting here to begin with.

Maybe we will not be able to make it absolutely secure. No, in fact, I know we cannot. Even if we do all the things I and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODE) and other Members of the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus are suggesting, we cannot make it perfect; but it is our best effort we are supposed to exert here in this Congress. That is the best we can do.

If we have something happen even after we have done it all, we can at least say we have tried everything. That is our responsibility. We cannot continue to ignore the existence of this threat to our very existence.

Other recent news, the Nation's biggest commercial nuclear power facility faces a possible terrorist threat. It just

came out. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said Thursday, he told the Senate Committee on Armed Services that terrorists may have targeted the Palo Verde Nuclear Plant in Arizona. He said he would not go into details about intelligence reports concerning the plans that may include an attack on the plant.

The Washington Times reported Thursday that terrorists have targeted the Arizona plant, and security officials are looking for Iraqi government sleeper cells that might carry out the attack. The threat to the facility came from sensitive information indicating the plant was targeted by Middle Eastern terrorists who were not further identified.

Earlier this week on our Florida coast, a Cuban Coast Guard vessel slipped in, it was a military vessel, got into Key West without ever being detected. These things go on and on.

In Miami, U.S. authorities made a fresh and urgent call for public help yesterday to find a Saudi-born man who could pose what they termed a very, very serious threat as part of an al Qaeda plot against the United States. Stepping up their search with an appeal to the U.S. Muslim community for information, the FBI said Adnan El Shukrijumah was a friend of a man now serving prison time for plotting to blow up a Florida power plant. The agency said that this individual is not charged with a crime but is being sought for questioning, involved with al Qaeda activities.

Just a couple of days ago as Baghdad was being bombed, it was reported on Fox News and Sky News as well as Worldnet Daily that there was a search going on for six Iraqis in either northern Mexico or the U.S. Southwest. They were said to be carrying toxic materials requiring temperature control. That means they are either biological or radiological. Either way, they are ominous and dangerous. According to tips by undercover investigators, the search had been going on for 2 to 3 days on the Mexican side, and now it is starting on the United States side.

We could go on through stories like this all night long. Long after I have run out of time to deliver those stories they could be available, because they are there. When we talk about immigration and immigration reform, we have to understand the importance of this concept.

It is not just an issue of jobs; it is not just an issue of acculturation, of integration into the society, of balkanization of America. All of those things are disconcerting. It is not just an issue of American citizens who are out of work and being displaced by people coming here from foreign countries. All those things are serious issues.

It is not just the issue of the amount of drugs coming across both borders and into our ports every single day. We talk about harmful substances and dangerous substances. Certainly the

tons and tons and tons of drugs that are being brought in by illegal smugglers, by illegal aliens carrying things on their shoulders and backpacks, in those backpacks it could be 60 pounds of marijuana, sarin gas; it could be all kinds of very, very ugly things.

All of those things are serious consequences, serious threats, I should say, serious issues. But we decided to start this series of discussions tonight with this one specific one of the danger to the country posed by porous borders because of the threat of terrorism that is so real.

I hope and pray that we never have to stand on this floor and say, I told you so, I told you, unless we secure those borders, something horrible is going to happen. Somebody is going to waltz across them and do something very, very bad. Do Members know what is going to happen? Not only are we going to be rushing to the borders to try and do something, but we are going to be overreacting, probably, internally. There are going to be threats to civil liberties that will develop as a result of some incident that occurs in this country.

I hate to think about this, and I hope and pray I am absolutely wrong in this prediction, but it is certainly not out of the question to suggest that this could happen. We are told by Homeland Security Director Ridge and everybody else in positions of authority to expect such a thing, to expect an event. Well, at least if this event occurs, let us at least be able to turn to our constituents and say, we have tried everything we can do. We have committed to you, when we have asked you for a vote and you have asked us to adhere to the Constitution and uphold that Constitution, we have tried to do that. The part of the Constitution that specifically refers to the protection of life and property, we have tried to do it. That is what I want to be able to say. We cannot ensure perfect security and safety, but we can try our best. That is the least we can do is the best that we can do, and we are not anywhere near it, I am sorry to say.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today through April 11 on account of personal reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. MALONEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. DELAURIO, for 5 minutes, today.